

**Testimony from Ann Pratt, Director of Organizing, Connecticut Citizen Action Group
In support of HB 221-An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave**

To Senator Ed Gomes and Representative Peter Tercyak and to other members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for raising this bill, and for the opportunity to express our support.

My name is Ann Pratt, and I am the Director of Organizing for Connecticut Citizen Action Group. We strongly support the passage of HB 221, An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave.

It was May, 1991 when my husband and I celebrated the adoption of our 5-day old son. After 8 years of unsuccessful medical treatments, operations and failed attempts to achieve pregnancy, our son's arrival into our family could not have been more poignant and significant for us both. In preparation for this life changing event, we had cobbled together an array of different family savings, attempted to do a good deal of cost cutting with our daily expenses AND I had managed to negotiate one month of paid leave, and an additional two months' unpaid leave so that I could stay home with my son. I cannot emphasize enough how important and significant this time with my son was for me and for him during those first few months of his life. During those first three months, I was able to begin the important and essential process of establishing a trusting and secure relationship with my infant son. It also allowed time for me to establish invaluable relationships and support structures within my surrounding community which I would ultimately end up depending upon when I returned to full time work later, and again, helped to create an essential environment of support and security for my son's early years of growth and development.

As many of you may know, the most recent studies conducted on early brain development from birth to the age of three establishes that it is this period of time in a child's life that the relationship with their primary care giver is invaluable and essential for not only future intellectual and emotional growth, but for on-going health living throughout our adult life. According to the now well established longitudinal study the "Adverse Childhood Experience" or ACES study, when this primary relationship is undermined, or subjected to any kind of trauma, the impact and consequences are extensive and long term, with clear and compelling evidence pointing towards evidence of emotional and physical damage throughout a person's life.

Making sure all of our very young children get the kind of healthy start they deserve is essential to building the kind of society and community we all want to see—and an objective that will require extensive and sustained effort from all of us. Establishing a Paid Family and Medical Leave program, that is available to all working families, is one step towards this important value and public good.

Connecticut has been a leader in enacting family friendly policy, from one of the first states to pass our own Paid Family and Medical Leave bill, and was the first in the nation to pass Paid Sick Leave. SB 221 is a continuation of this important and worthy tradition of being a leader in supporting families and children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 221, and to urge this committee to do right by Connecticut families and communities and pass SB 221.

